What’s in a name?

For us at United Way, it’s everything. Because it’s only when we work together—in a "united way"—that we can create a thriving community that enables us all to live our best possible lives. Our name describes our approach, and it’s what makes us different, and effective.

I’m Jennifer Heath, President and CEO of United Way of Greater New Haven. I’ve been leading this organization for about two years now, but I have served in United Way leadership roles for over a decade. Making sure your donation has the biggest impact in our region is my number one job. I take it personally because I live here too, I care about the people we serve, and I’m proud to raise my family in this community because of people like you.

This year’s report highlights some of the key ways we’re solving problems in our region. We are deepening our community listening so that we can craft solutions in partnership with those closest to the issues. You’ll find that new grassroots strategy taking shape in Hamden as United Way is working to end hunger.

Matthew’s story about participating in trauma-informed programs at school highlights how United Way uses creative approaches and partnerships to do the most good for local students. I hope you can imagine how expanding this work to more schools and students could dramatically improve children’s lives in our region.

And then there’s Glorimar, an Early Head Start parent who reminds us that we can all do great things with the right support at the right time combined with hard work. Taking a holistic, long-term approach, United Way not only helped her son thrive in school, but we also set Glorimar on the path to realize her own potential and graduate college.

As a United Way donor, you are part of this "united" approach, helping meet immediate needs and create long-term solutions that improved the lives of 51,640 people across our 12-town footprint this past year. This report is your report. The success stories couldn’t be written without you.

Thank you,

Jennifer Heath
President and CEO
United Way of Greater New Haven
Last year we served 51,640 people in greater New Haven.
What's inside.

Ending Hunger - Hamden's Story 4

Superpowers - Matthew's Story 8

Unstuck - Glorimar's Story 12

Impact of Donations 16

Financials 18

Why I LIVE UNITED 20

Our Donors 22

Volunteer Leadership 24

Photography: Ian Christmann
Ending hunger.

United Way started a conversation about a difficult town-wide issue, one that academics have labeled “food insecurity.” What we’re really talking about is hunger. And hunger is real—right here in our own region—even in communities that you might not expect.

Now it’s time to get to work.

HAMDEN’S STORY
Nusaibah Shatta, a mother of three, joined dozens of her neighbors in Hamden at a local elementary school on a rainy Friday night in April. Inside the gymnasium, United Way started a conversation about a difficult issue, one that academics have labeled “food insecurity.”

What we’re really talking about is hunger. And hunger is real, right here in our own region, in communities that you might not expect—like Hamden.

United Way and leaders at Hamden Public Schools organized the first Community Dinner focused on ending hunger, and residents were able to get candid over a plate of food. Questions prompted discussion about the biggest challenges accessing affordable and healthy food, what resources are needed to solve these issues, and what we need to do now.

**LEADING THE WAY**

“These are issues that have been on our doorstep, but it wasn’t really until United Way got involved that we brought the right people to the table who are networked in this work and understand this at a much higher level than we ever would on our own,” said Jody Goeler, Superintendent of Hamden Schools.

Geoler credits United Way with bringing a wide range of stakeholders together including food providers, community leaders, elected officials, as well as people who would use the services.

The top three challenges identified at the first Community Dinner were: lack of money, high cost of food, and transportation.

Our end goal: identify and end hunger in every Hamden neighborhood and, in turn, close the opportunity gap that it creates in children and adults. Because a hungry student can’t focus in the classroom, and a parent stressed about how they will put dinner on the table won’t be as productive at work. We believe no one should go hungry.

**WHY HAMDEN?**

Despite the official end of the recession, hunger continues to grow in greater New Haven. Increasingly, it’s families with children and the working poor who are going hungry. In Hamden, about 1 in 7 residents do not have access to affordable, nutritious food. When you consider the whole state of Connecticut, that number is 1 in 8 adults (CT Food Bank).
Making matters worse, 39% of Hamden families who are low income do not qualify for SNAP (food stamps). Local food pantries and meal programs help those who don’t qualify for food stamps and other government assistance programs, but these fixes alone won’t end hunger. Thousands still go without food.

So, that’s why we are starting here in Hamden. Because too many residents go without, and this town is ready for change. Using what we’ve learned at the first Community Dinner, as well as surveys we collected from over 60 school personnel and 200 parents, we know this is not a new issue.

Nearly half of students in Hamden schools receive free or reduced lunch. And 60% of teachers and school leaders surveyed say they keep food in their classrooms or offices to feed hungry children. We know that families are forced to make difficult choices when they are not financially stable. When we asked parents what they could do if they didn’t have to spend as much on food for their families, 40% would be able to save for emergencies and 71% would catch up on bills, like rent or mortgage.

**TURNING IDEAS INTO ACTIONS**

In collaboration with the schools, we’ve expanded summer meal service in Hamden. We secured additional mobile food pantry locations in Hamden that will connect families to groceries, including a location in southern Hamden staffed by United Way volunteers that will be available year-round, not just during summer months. In addition, we helped set up backpack programs in two schools so students have nutritious food over the weekend. This is just the beginning of the on-the-ground work already taking shape.

**NEXT STEPS**

We will continue to engage and listen to residents to gain insight through more community conversations. From there we will compile a comprehensive data report to take to policy-makers and develop long-term solutions. We know those deeper solutions to address financial stability for families won’t be found overnight.

Ending hunger will take more than food. For long-term sustainability we need to combat all of the social issues that contribute to the problem in the first place, and coordinate and leverage resources more effectively. It’s difficult but important work that can make a lasting impact. And, as we learn more about what works in Hamden, we can replicate those solutions in other communities where we know hunger also persists.

“We have a long way to go, we’re all on the same train, and we’re going to stay on the train until we get to the destination,” said Superintendent Goeler.

For Nusaibah, this intentional mix of preparation and tangible progress gives her hope. For her, optimism started with a seat at the table.

“I think it’s so important. That’s why I came. I hope we find a solution for this problem.”

Ending hunger is a big goal, but we know that people can only live their best lives if they are fed.

“**We have a long way to go, we’re all on the same train, and we’re going to stay on the train until we get to the destination.**”
Superpowers.

Imagine you had superpowers with no limits.
What would you do?
United Way is in 8 local schools, helping students rise up, deal with their trauma, and tap into their inner hero.

MATTHEW’S STORY
Superpowers:
we’ve all imagined having them and what we would do with an extraordinary skill.

Would you fly? Choose to be invisible? Have exceptional strength? Time travel? The options are vast.

Ask 13-year-old Matthew what it’s like having superpowers.

Matthew draws “Cool Man”— an original cartoon character doing hero-like things. Cool Man has no limits, and he can do things Matthew cannot. His alter ego was invented in therapy after his parents divorced over five years ago. And these superpowers help him express his emotions through tough times.

With his creativity, it’s no surprise Matthew was drawn to take the seven week art course offered by United Way at Clinton Avenue School.

United Way brought this programming to the school through the New Haven Trauma Coalition, a partnership to build resilience in our children. We know that resilient kids are better equipped to deal with life’s challenges. The class is taught by an instructor from Arts For Learning, where students are given the opportunity to learn through the arts by engaging in dance and music, storytelling and theatre, and digital and visual arts.

The students work on Chromebook laptops and are taught by local New Haven artist Jennifer Rae Cherrington, one of the teaching artists from Arts For Learning. She asks students to choose between making a movie trailer about themselves or an animated character, and helps them through the creative process.

“The kids already have a natural ability and language to work with these programs,” said Cherrington.

The hands-on experience gives them exposure to high-end computer software programs, like Adobe, that aren’t typically offered until high school.

“My favorite thing is seeing the kids connect with something that [can] be a career for them in the future, something they like doing.”

Matthew’s mother, Dominique, says the class is well suited for him with his love of drawing and artistic side. She is also encouraged that United Way is bringing trauma-informed programs to Matthew’s classroom and school, helping him, but also teaching all of his classmates the importance of recognizing and dealing with difficult emotions. And she firmly believes having an avenue for expression is important.

“Everybody has something that they are good at, but not always the opportunity or instrument to demonstrate that. But [it’s important] to have a creative outlet,” said Dominique. “There are many things you learn through music, through art, through dancing that you just can’t get from a book.”

For Dominique, she couldn’t be more proud that her son is flourishing both creatively and academically. The youngest of five children, Matthew has defied the odds. Born a micro-preemie at 1 lb 7 ounces, Matthew has not only overcome physical limitations, but emotional challenges as well.

From kidney issues and renal failure, to eye surgeries, to his parents’ difficult divorce, you wouldn’t know what Matthew has gone through by simply looking at him. He’s a typical seventh grader with a love for drawing, penmanship, basketball, and reading.

But what’s special about him is his strength and ability to bounce back. And what he doesn’t know is that this skill far surpasses any fictional character or superhero’s powers.
Are you better off than your parents?

Sometimes you are the first in your family to hit a major milestone.

For Glorimar Lara, United Way’s two-generational Early Head Start program focused on the well-being of her child, as well as building a relationship with the family.

And that was exactly the kind of support that changed everything.

GLORIMAR’S STORY
“I was the only person in my family who graduated high school, and I’m the first to graduate college.”

This is a tremendous moment for Glorimar Lara and her family. A moment she has dreamed of for many years. She stood in line, waiting for her turn, and then in front of her cheering family she received her diploma alongside hundreds of others.

She did it.

The story behind her graduation, and how she prevailed, makes this day even more special.

“I felt stuck, until I was able to get help from United Way, get everything done, and here I am today!”

Glorimar’s youngest son Giovanni, now 7-years-old, was in United Way’s Early Head Start program. Fast forward four years, he’s finishing first grade and loving school and reading. Glorimar credits United Way’s efforts not only for her child’s success, but also her own.

“If it wasn’t for United Way, I wouldn’t be here.”

In between working and raising a family, Glorimar squeezed in time to study and plot a career path as a professional chef. Although it took her longer than she had planned, she stands there in her blue cap and gown beaming.

Early Head Start provides child-development and family-centered services for children ages birth to three, as well as supports for parents to help them achieve their goals.

United Way manages this complex program in our region, which served a total of 150 infants, toddlers, and their families from New Haven, West Haven, and Hamden last year. Using local dollars to leverage federal funds, United Way works with community partners to implement the program.

Early Head Start makes infant and toddler care affordable for low-income families. Just as importantly, it also improves the quality of that care. Through Early Head Start, United Way has invested in infrastructure improvements like safe playgrounds, research-tested curriculum, and offered professional development for teachers and staff at each site, raising the quality level of all classrooms at our partner programs. This creates a ripple effect—benefiting all children in the program, whether or not they have an Early Head Start funded slot.

The program also helps connect children and families to services in order to be and stay healthy—ensuring children are at their best and able to learn. The two-generational program focuses on the well-being of the child, as well as helping parents connect to services that can help them accomplish their life goals.

And as Glorimar embarks on her career in the food service industry, she knows that United Way, and you, are part of her success story.

“It’s like a family, it’s like an extended family.”
United Way helps people live their best possible lives.
Last year, we served 51,640 people.

Because of donors like you, United Way of Greater New Haven has been helping children and families in our 12-town region live their best possible lives for nearly 100 years. From Orange to Madison, New Haven to Bethany we fight for the Health, Education, and Financial Stability of every person in every community.

We do this work by focusing on more than one approach. Together with our partners we house the homeless, feed the hungry, prepare infants and toddlers for kindergarten, and help families secure jobs and get on solid financial footing.

Here are some specific examples of how your donation is at work in our community.

**ENDING HUNGER**

Connecticut is the wealthiest state in the country, but 1 in 6 children go hungry, and 1 in 8 adults go hungry. We are working with 70 partners to create community solutions around the goal of ending hunger in our region. Last year United Way mobilized volunteers to staff mobile pantry sites across New Haven serving 1,930 families. This year we’re expanding to Hamden. For more than a decade we have also managed the federal Emergency Food and Shelter Program (EFSP) which provides 567,210 meals locally each year.

**ENDING HOMELESSNESS**

Studies have shown that providing people who are chronically homeless with permanent, supportive housing saves taxpayers money that would otherwise be spent on emergency room visits, police and fire services, and shelters. Since we started working in a new way, coordinating the region’s homeless providers, we have housed 1,144 people. United Way’s locally managed EFSP funding has also sheltered the homeless for 57,008 nights each year. United Way is also championing diversion, keeping families out of shelters and in their homes when possible.
BUILDING COMMUNITY

United Way connects you to your passions through meaningful volunteer projects. Last year local United Way volunteers donated 9,205 hours of their time. We are also building our community by bringing together people and organizations to solve big problems that cannot be solved by any one organization working alone. United Way also engages 172 companies in workplace giving campaigns each year, giving 5,845 donors like you an easy and impactful way to support the nonprofit work and solutions you care about the most.

BUILDING RESILIENCE

90% of New Haven students have been exposed to trauma. We have served 2,684 students this past school year with New Haven Trauma Coalition programs that help them cope, give them creative outlets, and connect with caring adults and their classmates. We know that strong relationships are essential for kids to thrive in life. That’s why United Way increased access to parenting courses in our community called Circle of Security. Last year we served 151 parents, caregivers, and teachers. United Way also supported enrichment programs for 1,963 students during and after school.

BOOSTING ACHIEVEMENT

All children deserve the opportunity to achieve their full potential and a quality education, beginning at birth, gives them that opportunity. United Way manages a regional Early Head Start program, providing 88 slots in West Haven, New Haven, and Hamden to give infants and toddlers a great start. We also hold professional development for teachers and staff to improve the quality of early care and education in our region. Also, last year we gave away 3,729 books to local school libraries and directly to children at various community events.

STRENGTHENING FINANCIAL STABILITY

We are working to help families get on the path to financial stability. United Way helped design and fund the Secure Jobs program which helps formerly homeless people (primarily women) overcome the obstacles that can prevent them from finding a job. When it comes to formerly incarcerated individuals, we support their successful reentry into the workforce through a program called EMERGE. This year, United Way supported 17 free tax prep sites returning over $7 million dollars to our region. United Way has also trained more than 125 non-profit staff so they could, in turn, help others build better financial habits through a program called Your Money, Your Goals.
United Way has a unique ability to maximize the effect of a dollar and direct funds to the most impactful programs.

2017 REVENUE

- 52% Individual & Corporate Gifts
  $3,869,899
- 44% Grants
  $3,317,378
- 4% Other
  $267,192

Grants include grant funding released from restriction for use in the current fiscal year.

2017 EXPENSES

- 80% Programs
  $5,961,488
- 10% Development
  $766,521
- 10% Management & General
  $770,422

Grants include grant funding released from restriction for use in the current fiscal year.

To learn more about United Way’s finances and investments please visit uwgnh.org/financials where you can find copies of our 990 and audited financial reports.
WHY I LIVE UNITED

United Way donors come from all over our 12-town region and from different backgrounds. You are diverse, you connect with specific programs and causes that stir your soul, but you share one thing in common, you care.

“It really goes back to my upbringing, I’ve always been raised to do for others even if it’s a tough time for you.”

JEREMY RICE, COMCAST
“United Way helped me realize I could get myself together, get focused, and go back to school. I love giving back and being able to help others the way I was helped all those years ago.”

BRENDA CLAY-OZENNE, YALE NEW HAVEN HEALTH

“Doing good feels good. What I love about United Way is they’re experts in New Haven so I can rest comfortably that if I donate to United Way they will find people in need and find effective ways of helping them.”

LISA SAVIN, YALE UNIVERSITY
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